

Dagenham are ready for any slip

ENFIELD: CAN THEY STAND THE PACE?

CAN Enfield stand the pace? That's the key question on everyone's lips as the Rothmans Isthmian League championship nears its close.

There's not much doubt that the task ahead of the Middlesex club will test their resources to the limit and if they can overcome their fixture congestion few will deny them the title. But just take a look at the size of the task.

They have 13 more league matches left to fit into the last month of the season, seven of which are away from home. The trouble is, Enfield have fallen so far behind on their fixtures due to their success in three cup competitions — the F.A. Trophy, The Middlesex Senior Cup and London

Senior Cup — they will have to play several of their matches on successive days.

They have two main batches of matches. The first is on April 26, 27 and 28 when they meet Tooting, Hayes and Staines. Then on May 5, 6, 7 and 8 they play Leatherhead, Hitchin, Oxford and Staines. If they don't pass out with exhaustion it'll be a miracle!

Despite this pressure on Enfield, I still think they are capable of capturing the league from Wycombe. Much will depend on injuries and the morale of the team, and they won't need telling that Dagenham will be waiting to pounce on any slip up.

STUART EARP looks at the run-in to the season

The 'Daggers' have eight matches left at the time of writing, three at home, five away. None of them are easy and they include a visit to Loakes Park on Thursday, May 6 when the Wanderers will be looking for revenge after their 1-0 defeat at Victoria Road.

Dagenham have been troubled with injuries this season and face such difficult opposition in their last few games that I regard them as second to Enfield as favourites.

The only other two clubs in with a chance, in my view, are Wycombe and Ilford. Tooting have slipped recently while Dulwich and Staines have played too many

matches.

Both Wanderers and Ilford can only hope for a dramatic slip from either of the favourites. Ilford have seven games left, three at home, four away. They entertain Wycombe on the last day of the season — May 8. They should pick up victories at home to Sutton and Tooting and away to Southall and Leytonstone. The home match with Wycombe and visits to Slough and Hayes will be more difficult.

And so to Wycombe, the current champions, who last week announced that Ted Powell will succeed manager Brian Lee in July, the Blues have six league fixtures to fulfil — home to Barking,

Dagenham, Walthamstow and Leatherhead and away to Clapton and Ilford. If they win the lot, they will have a total of 86 points, which is unlikely to be enough.

I doubt if Wanderers will be particularly disappointed if the championship goes elsewhere. They have won it three times in the last four years, finishing fourth on the other occasion. A place in the top four this year will be a fine achievement.

Financially, they must aim for one of the top three places which carry prize-money of £1,000, £500 and £300 respectively. They can also expect something like £200 plus from the sportsmanship pool and also their cash for three-clear-goal victories.

Enfield, however, will receive only their £40 win bonuses. They have already totted up nine penalty points and will therefore forfeit any prize-money for winning the league. The cash will go into the sportsmanship pool which will be shared pro rata amongst the clubs who have stayed within the penalty point limit of eight.

So far, 11 clubs stand a chance of a share of the pool compared with 13 at the end of last season. Hitchin are likely to gain most as they have only one penalty point. Bishop's Stortford, Sutton and Dagenham have two and Wycombe three.

WYCOMBE

WYCOMBE Wanderers' remaining fixtures: April 13: Leatherhead home, April 16: Walthamstow home, April 23: Clapton away, April 27: Barking home, May 6: Dagenham home, May 8: Ilford away.

ENFIELD

ENFIELD'S remaining fixtures: Home — Staines, Tooting, Dulwich, Hayes, Leytonstone, Hitchin. Away — Leatherhead, Dagenham, Kingstonsian, Tooting, Hayes, Oxford, Sutton.

DAGENHAM

DAGENHAM'S remaining fixtures: Home — Enfield, Staines, Sutton. Away — Hendon, Sutton, Tooting, Wycombe, Bishop's Stortford.

ILFORD

ILFORD'S remaining fixtures: Home — Sutton, Tooting, Wycombe. Away: Southall, Hayes, Leystone, Slough.